

Since *Skyscrapers*: New Histories of Native-Newcomer Relations in Honour of the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of J.R. Miller's *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens*

KEITH THOR CARLSON and KATHRYN M. LABELLE

It has been a quarter century since the publication of Jim Miller's *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1989). Coming as it did in the wake of the modern Native rights movement and the Indigenous cultural renaissance of the 1970s and '80s — and informed by a series of landmark court cases that alerted Canadians to the centrality of historical questions to pressing national political issues — Miller's work marked the coming of age of a new type of Indigenous historical scholarship in Canada that brought to the fore the experiences and stories of Indigenous peoples even as it firmly situated them within the colonial history of the Canadian nation-state.

J.R. Miller caught a wave, as it were, for as he noted in his preface to the first edition, his study was “greatly stimulated by the work of others” (p. xiii). In the decades prior to *Skyscrapers*, many historians had already started to question the tendency of earlier scholars to relegate First Nations history to the introductory chapters of general Canadian survey texts or to consider that history as important only within certain subfields (most prominently in fur trade history). But it was really *Skyscrapers*, with its nation-wide coverage and its characterizing of Canada as a colonial settler state that led non-Indigenous Canadians to consider the history of Indigenous people as integral to the country's narrative, rather than a mere backdrop. Miller highlighted how First Nations peoples and cultures had resisted and were renewing — indeed, that they were charting a course into the future despite Canadian policies that sought to displace and assimilate them. *Skyscrapers* was a history of what the Canadian state had done to First Nations, as well as a story of how Aboriginal people responded. But more than that, it was a work of scholarship that boldly challenged non-Indigenous Canadians to learn about their past so that together with First Nations peoples they could create a better future for everyone. As such, the twenty-fifth anniversary of *Skyscrapers*, coinciding as it does with the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action, remains a poignant and inspiring work of scholarship.

The articles in this special issue represent new perspectives on Native-newcomer relations in Canada. In one way or another, all of them are

either inspired by the work of Jim Miller or enabled by the work that he and others of his generation (such as Sylvia VanKirk, Jacqueline Peterson, Olive Dickason and Arthur Ray) have done to better understand the shared history of Canada's Indigenous and settler societies.

The first essay in this collection, by George Colpitts, reorients our understandings of both the forms and motivations for international/tribal cooperation during the fur trade era. He reveals how memories, spirituality, and understandings of a neutral landscape enabled the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot nations), Cree, Nakoda, and Sauteaux peoples to put their differences aside and cooperate during a series of particularly mild winters in the 1830s that disrupted the migratory actions of bison in Alberta's "Neutral Hills." Such ethno-historical analysis holds important lessons for contemporary society as it struggles with the growing crisis of environmental change.

The second article by Allan Downey and Susan Neylan focuses on the so-called "Indian Sports Days" in Coastal British Columbia. Downey and Neylan's research presents a convincing portrait of how Indigenous people transformed baseball, soccer, and other sports into vehicles for Indigenous agency and resistance. Their research demonstrates how practices designed to assimilate Indigenous peoples could be adopted and adapted to counter colonialism.

With a similar goal in mind, "The Adoption of Frances T" complicates our understanding of Canadian settler-colonial history by looking at a compelling case of transracial adoption, where, in the 1930s, a young mixed-ethnicity girl was adopted by First Nations parents. This perfectly legal action triggered a crisis among bureaucrats perplexed by a family whose composition challenged the government's firmly established notions of racial and gender hierarchies.

The fourth article by Philip Goldring highlights northern Indigenous voices and perspectives through an examination of the Qikiqtani Truth Commission (QTC), which from 2007 to 2012 documented the history of thirteen Inuit communities for the period 1950–1975 — the era when the federal government, with tragic consequences, compelled Inuit peoples to relocate from their traditional homes to settler-style permanent communities. Goldring's article, more overtly than the other articles in this collection, makes a clear call for historians to employ their methodological approaches and training for the benefit of Indigenous communities and their current initiatives.

Accompanying these articles is a historiographical review essay by a team of University of Saskatchewan doctoral students who seek to highlight some of the most important scholarship to appear in the twenty-first century. Their assessment reveals the extent to which the historiography of Indigenous-settler society relations has diversified in recent years, not only

in terms of the subjects being covered, but also in the methodologies and theories historians are using. Overall, the authors contend that the most common trend among historians has been to decolonize Indigenous history through a rigorous deconstruction of general interpretations. Complementing the students' essay, this issue also contains a special section of individual reviews of recently published books in Indigenous history.

Taken as a whole, we believe this collection is a testament to the long-lasting legacy of *Skyscrapers*. J.R. Miller's synthesis provided a nation-wide study of Native-newcomer relations that served as a stable foundation for a vast body of future scholarship inspired by the themes of agency and resilience. These articles and reviews highlight the extent of the dynamic and innovative work that is currently being done in Canada, giving evidence for the diverse research that animates our field and will continue to do so into the future.



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